69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

INTO THE MÈO COUNTRY

489 It was fitting that at Luang Prabang the impetus of travel should
509 have spent itself. Not even convoys ever came as far as this.
● Groups of unfortunate men occasionally set off on foot and walked for as long as three weeks through jungle trails to relieve isolated posts. Other arrivals and departures were by a weekly D.C.3 plying between Luang Prabang and Vientiane. It was booked up well ahead.

505 Down at the riverside the story was much the same as at Vientiane. There were pirogues which supposedly made regular journeys, but no one was prepared to commit himself to positive information about them. One authority went so far as to say that it was out of the question to hope to travel north by pirogue because the river was too low at this time of the year. I had just thanked him when the engine of what looked like a totally abandoned hulk, lying in an oily pool not far away, suddenly burst into wheezy activity. One of the crew of two said that they would be leaving in half an hour. Bound for where? – Vientiane? No . . . Xieng
701 Khong – for the unnavigable north, of course. All the space had been reserved for a body of ex-pirates who had changed sides and had now, it was said, demanded to be sent back to fight their former allies.

While I was slowly piecing together this jig-saw of information in pidgin-French, the brand-new patriots arrived for embarkation; a most apathetic looking body of men. In their ill-fitting uniforms they were standardized; deprived of individuality by a common factor of misery, an ingrained habit of expressionless stoicism. Silently they filed up the gang-plank and filled the dim interior of the pirogue. It was difficult to believe that the fire of conviction burned in any of these breasts, and I felt sorry for the French N.C.O. who was being sent back in charge.

000 But Monsieur Leveau said that there would also be a pirogue going south one day, and to save me from being victimized by Chinese cat-and-mouse tactics he sent for the owner and asked him when the boat would leave. With gentle satisfaction the Chinese

facing: COCHIN-CHINA: THE SEARCH FOR SMALL FISH